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Burleson NOW MAGAZINE
The Community Magazine Serving Burleson, Joshua and the Surrounding Area

Editor's Note

Good News!

As the economy takes its toll on our employment and spending habits, we are helping each other. Some of our most-in-need citizens are adults 55 and older, who have grown accustomed to living on fixed incomes, yet do not have up-to-date skills for bringing in more money to fill the gap. To the rescue come programs like Experience Works, a federally funded program, which serves Burleson in multiple areas. First, the program serves Burleson's faith-based and community organizations by placing seniors in community service positions. Secondly, those seniors are paid wages by the federal government. Finally, those wages are spent in the community. Read about Linda Falkushan, our main feature this month, who has improved her life thanks to Experience Works. For more information, you may contact Pat Cunningham, director of Experience Works, at (817) 558-7020.

Wishing you a great February, Burleson!

Melissa Collins
BurlesonNOW Editor

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Finding a Silver Lining

— By Jaime Ruark

In trying times, it sometimes seems impossible to find a silver lining in all the clouds. It can be hard to give to others when you have so little yourself. It can even be difficult to find a reason to smile. In such times, it is heartening to know there are those among us who are finding those silver linings, giving to others in need and smiling for those who cannot.

For the past 25 years, the Harvest House — a faith-based charity organization here in Burleson — has been working to help those in need. Their mission statement professes to "assist in the alleviation of poverty, disease, pain and suffering by providing the needy with food, clothing, counseling, shelter and medication." Operated largely by volunteers, the Harvest House has made a difference in countless lives. As so often seems the case, when helping others, blessings are received in return. This is especially true for Linda Falkushan, who has been working for almost a year.

Linda and her husband, Stephan, have lived in Burleson for four years, but their family roots reach across oceans from southeastern Europe. Linda was born in Romania, and the accent is still discernable in her speech, lending an almost musical cadence to her accented English. "We left Romania in 1970 to move to Israel, where we lived for 14 years, but I still have the Romanian accent," she laughed. "Romania is a beautiful country, but they [were under communist rule], so we went to Israel where I had my children. We had a very good life, but we wanted to come to the United States. We did all the paperwork and waited for the visa. In July of 1984, we came to the United States, during the Olympics."

Linda and Stephan, along with their daughter, Veronique, and son, Edward, moved to California, where they lived for 20 years. For the Falkushan family, the move was a dream come true. Like so many, Linda wanted, "a better life, especially because of my two kids. Everyone wants the same thing, to have a better life. There are more opportunities here."

Linda has always felt a calling for nonprofit organizations, working with mentally handicapped and special needs people or foster children and their families. This reveals an important part of her beliefs and ideals; she seeks out opportunities for herself and her family, which in turn, enable her to help provide opportunities for others.

Talented with numbers, Linda has spent her life as an accountant and bookkeeper in one capacity or another. In 2004, she brought her skilled mindset to Burleson. "My son got transferred here to Burleson and we decided that if he was coming here, we would, too," she shared, speaking of leaving behind her granddaughter, Shaday, in California to be with

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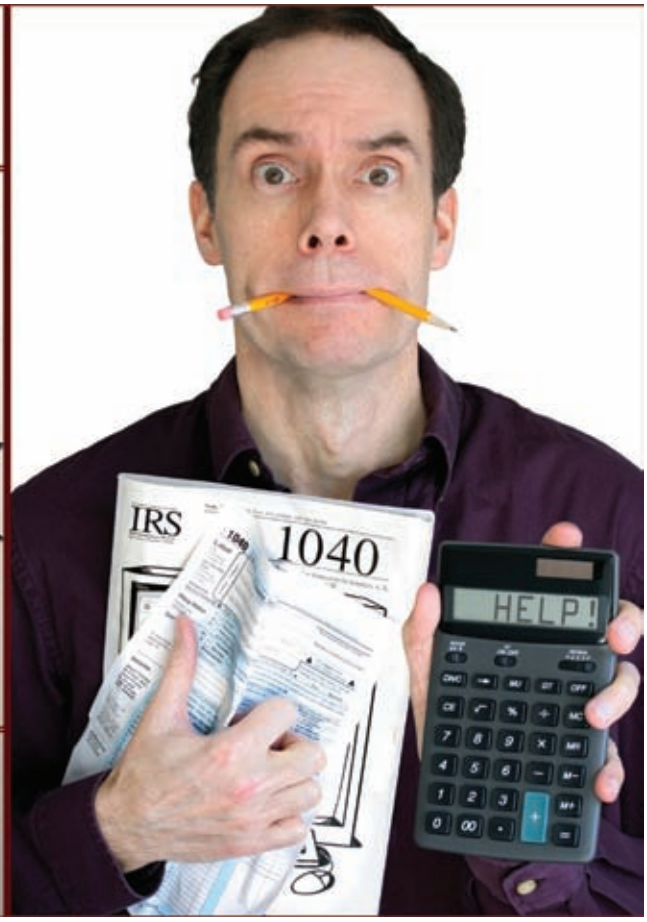

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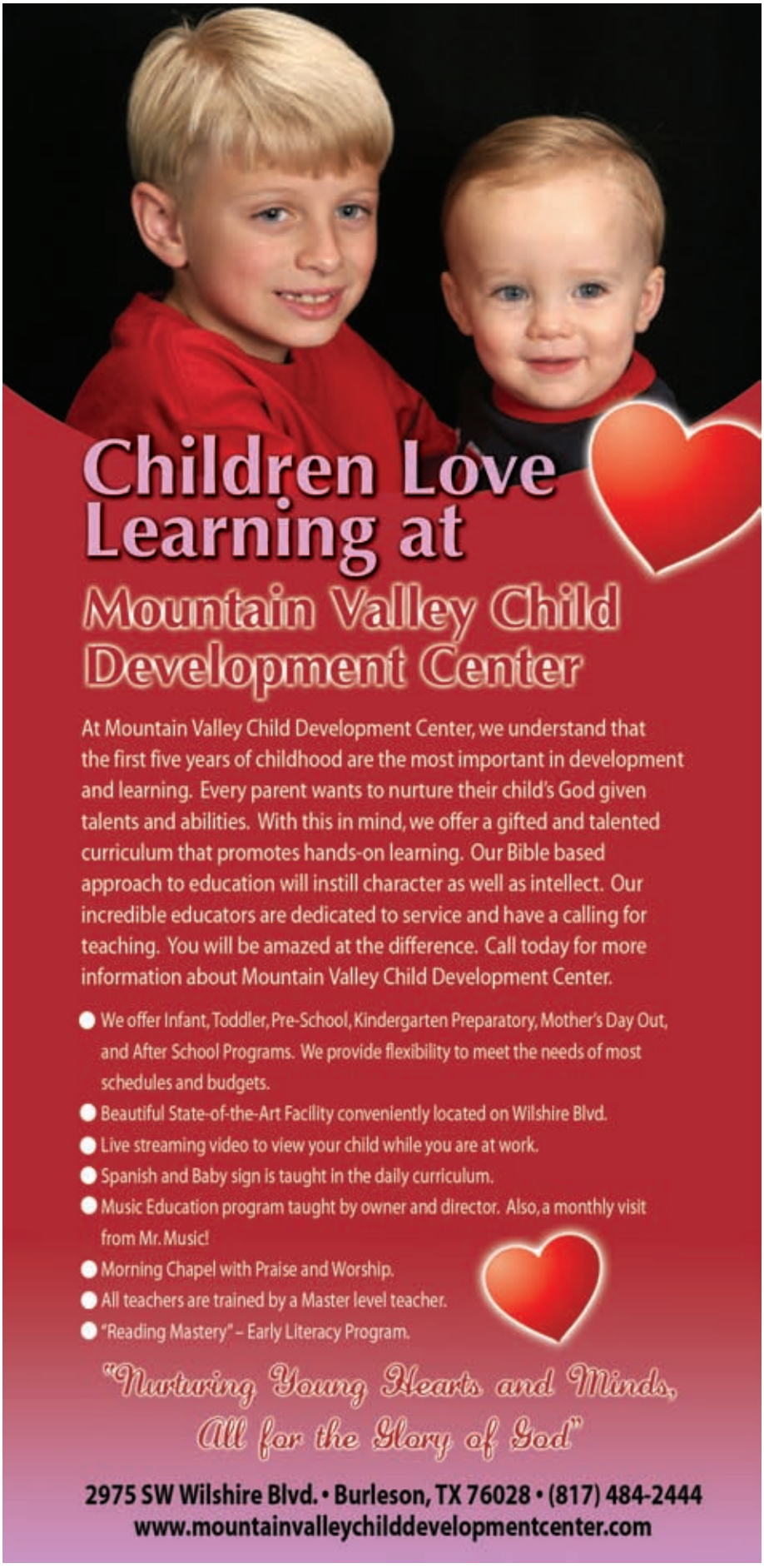


her other grandchildren, Sophia and Olivia, here in Texas.

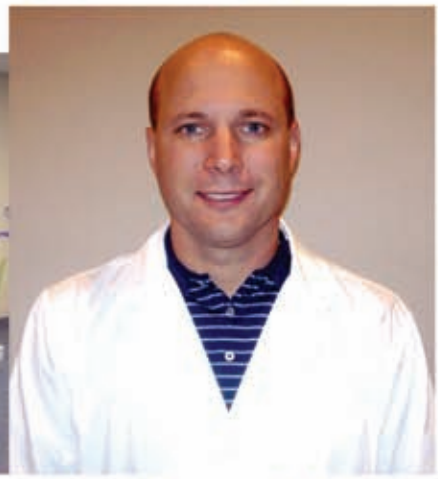
Deciding to retire, Linda enjoyed being with her family and learning about her new community, often spending time at the Senior Citizen Center. "We did not know people here, so we would go there to be involved. We would play bingo and learn Western dancing," she smiled. However, because of the present downward cycle of the economy, Linda was soon faced with the difficult decision facing many people these days — going back to work.

"Everything is very expensive," she expressed. "My husband is retired and on pension as well. It's not easy to be retired. You have your salary and then you go to one-fourth of that or maybe less. It's very hard." Adding to the dilemma facing retirees, such as Linda, is the necessity of healthcare, with the ever-rising cost of doctors' visits and medications that many cannot do without. "They [the government] raise the Medicare so high, the one- or two-percent raise they give you sometimes makes the pension less than you had the previous year," she lamented.

The clouds threatening the horizon of Linda's happiness seemed to have no silver lining.

The clouds threatening the horizon of Linda's happiness seemed to have no silver lining. Not only was it necessary for her to return to the work force, but she would now be competing for work with people many years younger. "When you get old, not many people want to hire you, even when you have a lot of experience. It can be difficult to find a job," she stated. Linda did not know at

Keeping Smiles Healthy And Young



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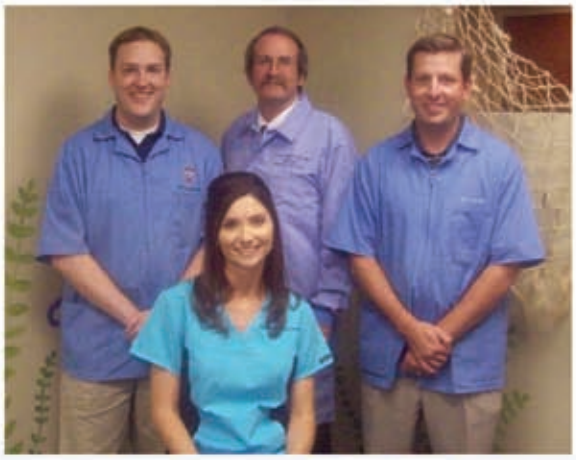

(l to r) Casey Stroud, D.D.S., Dale Martin, D.D.S, Drew Jamison, D.D.S., Kimberly Woods - Office Coordinator.

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the time that her bleak situation would be made brighter by those times spent with fellow seniors playing bingo and learning to dance.

Every Thursday, workers from the federal program called Experience Works, a national charitable and community-based organization, would come to the Senior Citizen Center to speak with the seniors. "The people come looking for workers," Linda explained. "They explain everything to you; they help you fill out the papers and if they find a place for you, they place you there. Then every once in a while they come to check up on you, make sure you are liking the job, hoping you don't have any problems. They are very good; very thorough."

Linda jumped at the chance, making use of the help they offered. "In 2006, I applied with Experience Works. It's a very, very good program for retired people and older people," she related. Placed with the Harvest House Program, Linda was once again in her element, working with numbers and people in need. "I love this place. The things they do for people — it is unbelievable," she enthused. "I am very thankful to Experience Works. Your self-esteem is so much higher when you are doing something, being active and involved."

Linda has fallen in love with those she works with and those she works for. When her one-year contract is over with Experience Works, she plans to continue at Harvest House. Work, she said, makes her feel more alive. "Knowing you can do it yourself, and helping people at the same time is wonderful," she imparted, her bright eyes making it easy to realize that senior citizens and retirees are vital to the heart and soul of the community.

Experience Works is helping those like Linda to find the silver lining in the clouds. "You make money; you are out of the house; you interact with people; you do not depend on anyone to do things for you. It gives you something you can count on," she smiled. After all, even in troubled times, a smile is contagious. NOW

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Peace in Passion

— By Melissa Collins

Wind blows all year long in Joshua. However, that does not slow the pace of life at Passion Horse Ranch, where Jeff and Debra Naismith work together to create a simple, peaceful home for themselves and their huge family of baby draft horses. The couple jokes that they are like the old television show, *Green Acres* – but reversed! "I'm the one who wants to be in the city," said Jeff, "and she's the one who wants to be in the country."

The couple moved to Joshua from Los Angeles, California, three years ago; within 12 months, their dream of helping helpless horses became reality. "The deal was, we would come here; she would get her horse ranch; she'd be next door to her daughter; and I would get to retire," Jeff explained, yet he works even harder now than when he sold elevators!

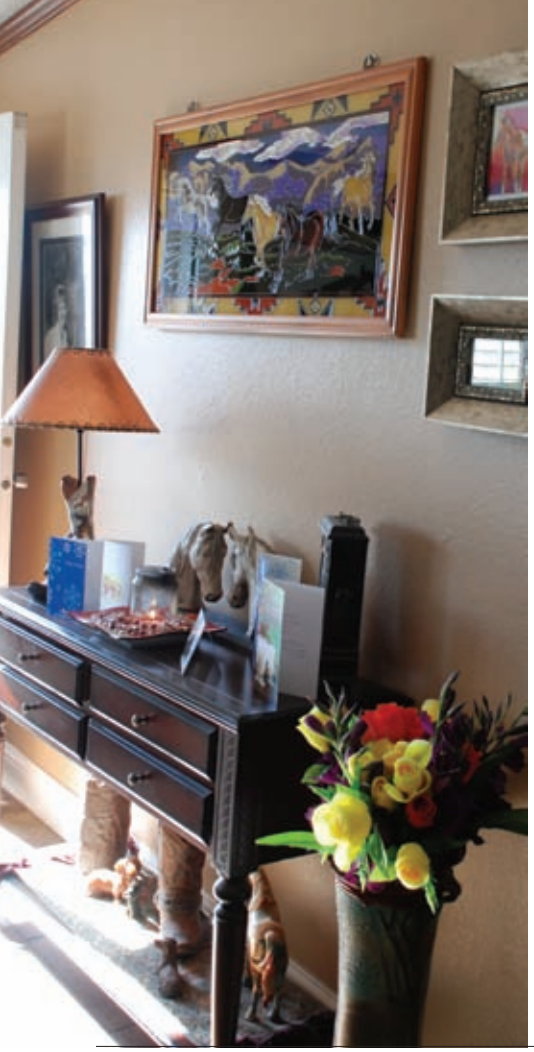
"Mostly what I do, as a retired man, is grocery shopping. And, I take the truck and flat bed and go to town and get a lot of supplies for this ranch. Tractor Supply loves us! I buy lumber, metal materials and hay every week — big round bales. I've got a tractor here. I take bales off the trailer, and put them where they need to go with the tractor," said the man from Los Angeles, laughing at his change in lifestyle.

"When things are broken, which is every minute, I'm trying to get something fixed."

It is not the Naismith's brand new Palm Harbor mobile home which needs fixing. It's the gate, the barns, the arena, the dog pen and the pool. Fixing is not always the right term, either. Debra, Jeff and their extended family of volunteers have been hard at work building Passion Horse Ranch from the ground up.

Together, they approached the building of their home with the basic philosophy of keeping life simple. "Our children are grown," Debra said. "We wanted something nice, kind of small, since neither of us want to do a lot of cleaning anymore. We both had power jobs and have flipped our lives completely around." Debra, who worked full time for 23 years as a credit manager, has begun working out of their home as an underwriter.

"No commute! The whole thing is to be peaceful. I was raised in the country," she said. "It's nice to be back in the country." Many days, the couple does not leave their ranch, where Debra spends free time outside and Jeff hangs out inside. Often, he's at his computer updating www.passionhorse.com, the Web site for the organization the couple founded to help find homes for baby horses saved from Canadian slaughterhouses. "I give Jeff all the content ideas. Then Jeff designs the site," Debra said. "She



tells me what she needs there," smiled Jeff, "and I have to create it."

"We are true partners," insisted Debra, describing their passion for the horses. "Our 'babies' range in age from weanlings to 2-year-olds and have been rescued from feedlots that get their horses from Canadian farms specializing in collecting urine from pregnant mares. Pregnant Mare Urine (PMU) is the active ingredient in Premarin, a drug used for hormone replacement therapy in menopausal women. The foals from the pregnant mares, a kind of 'by-product,' are rounded up once a year and transferred to feed lots where they are sold to slaughter."

In order to house the rescued horses, the Naismiths hired a contractor to build an 11-stall barn, which they manage organically using sand instead of straw shavings. Volunteers keep it mucked. "The new three-stall barn was built of donated materials by volunteers," beamed Debra. "We built that because we just rescued 21 horses and we needed additional shelter."

The Naismith's home is a wide-open Western home that Debra decorated with paintings of horses they have rescued. "Leslie Webb, based in California, does the cartoony paintings of rescued horses. I have been collecting this horse stuff for about nine years,"

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said Debra, a natural horsewoman, who has loved horses her whole life and only been able to indulge her obsession within the last seven years. Debra loves the warm tones in the living room, which was painted by Jeff. He chose brown, terra cotta and tan to match the linoleum tile in the heart of the home, where the couple hosts parties for volunteers. No kitchen or dining table is found in the 1,400-square-foot home. Instead, the Naismiths place the food on the bar in their sizable kitchen. On the central column hangs a ranch-style clock made by Julie Hodgson, a Cleburne resident who volunteers for Passion Horse Ranch.

In his office, Jeff keeps a carefully painted oil-on-wood which once belonged to his grandfather. "It was given to him as a payment for something from an East European refugee after World War II. We took it about a year ago to San Antonio, to [the television show] *Antiques Roadshow*," Jeff said. "The appraiser said, 'I can see this was done by an artist who was not well trained. It's worth about $100 decorative.' To this day, I'm disappointed."

That painting is the only part of Jeff in the home — unless you count the big-screen television in the bedroom, where he likes to play Nintendo, Playstation III and watch documentaries. When he has to take a little break, even the master bath is full of horses — including a vibrant watercolor of a purple and silver draft horse, but once he goes out the back door, to the pool, Jeff is in his element. "During the

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Dr. Choudhary has extensive training in gastroenterological and biliary endoscopic procedures. He is one of only 277 Fellows of the American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. The American College of Gastroenterology and the American Medical Association, among other organizations, have honored Dr. Choudhary with many awards and recognitions.

Dr. Choudhary completed his residency in internal medicine at Bellevue Hospital Center and New York University Medical Center in Manhattan. He did a three-year fellowship in gastroenterology and hepatology at Yale University Gastroenterology Program in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and he received advanced training in therapeutic gastrointestinal endoscopy at Tulane University Medical Center in New Orleans.

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Dr. Neef completed his obstetrics and gynecology residency at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, where he received the 2006 Academic Excellence award. He earned his medical degree from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Medical School. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in finance from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

Dr. Neef holds memberships in the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Texas Medical Association. Located in the Huguley medical office buildings, he accepts most insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid.

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summer, I love to swim," he said. "I'm a water person, born and raised in southern California on the beach. Not that this is the beach." To create his oasis in Joshua, Jeff planted several types of palms and in 2008, one of them exploded in growth. Jeff looks forward to watching his palms thrive. "It's supposed to look kind of like Palm Springs out there!"

The Naismiths revel in being homebodies. "We were before, but especially now since we're 25 miles from town. There are days when we don't leave the place and we love it," Debra said. "People come and go off the property all day long. Volunteers just show up to take care of animals. Whatever needs to be done just gets done. It's amazing."

Amidst all this passion, there is peace. Living out on this plain, Jeff has learned, requires patience. "You hear that wind? That," he smiled, "means I've got black dirt going into that pool." Oh well. He's also got Debra — and Bentley, Bailey, Cisco, Maple and all the rescue horses that come, and then go on, to new homes in, possibly, less-windblown pastures. NOW

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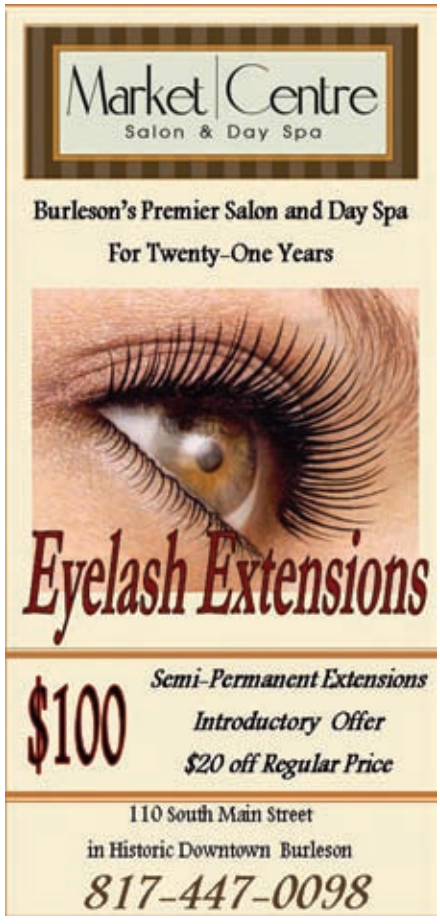
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A Potter's Wheel

— By Jaime Ruark

Sometimes, hobbies turn into more than just a pleasant way to spend time. Like a piece of pottery brought to life by two hands and put through a sort of trial-by-fire in a kiln, people's lives are often shaped and molded into something they perhaps never dreamed of. This is true of Leah Leach, former legal assistant and court coordinator turned talented potter.

Asked where her pottery passion came from, Leah said with a smile, "That whole Demi Moore movie, *Ghost* — it just looked like so much fun!" Thus, while her sons attended summer classes at a museum in Fort Worth, Leah passed the time taking a pottery class. "The first time I got on the potter's wheel, I was hooked. In fact, before I started taking classes at the college, my husband, Allan, built me my first wheel."

Allan was an important catalyst in Leah's pottery beginnings. His commercial heating and air conditioning business' success necessitated Leah's help with the book work, so she quit her career to work with him. This left her with many free hours during the day. "I was starting to get bored, so in 1997, I started taking classes at Tarrant County Junior College," she recalled. "I had a fabulous teacher, Ron Durham, who turned out to be a good friend. He was so supportive; after I had been in class about four years, when I was to the point where I was helping other students and not really throwing pots as much as I should have been, he kicked me out!" Telling Leah she was wasting her time and talents, Ron was determined to get a kiln built for Leah at her own house, so she could stop making the drive to class and start making pottery.

Ron guessed Leah would need 500 bricks to build her own kiln. She and Allan began collecting the seemingly enormous amount, finding the bricks in surprising places: a random field nearby or climbing over hills and through mud piles near Granbury. Two years and 2,300 bricks later, Leah's propane gas-fired, downdraft kiln was finished. "Al's been so motivational and he's worked so hard. The kiln is freestanding, so everything had to be perfectly level. Al actually measured every brick to make sure each one would fit."

Leah now has two kilns, the other being a *raku* kiln (a traditional Japanese kiln), sitting side-by-side in her backyard. Her innate talent quickly turned pottery into more than just a hobby. She has had booths at many festivals, such as Mayfest in Burleson, Grapefest and Main Street Days in Grapevine, often displaying her work alongside that of her pottery buddy, Ken Orr. Her work, which she has whimsically named Roaring Rabbit Pottery, has been offered at local shops. She also hosts an annual pottery show and Texas-style fiddling jam in the fall at her studio in Alvarado, which is open to the public.

Leah's pieces are diverse, unique and beautiful. "I'm not one of those potters whose pieces all look the same. I get bored easily. I'm eclectic and love learning new things, so my pieces are all different," she shared. Small green bowls with fluted edges, pink saggar-fired vases, blue plates carved with fish, large white crackle-glazed vases, delicate goblets and ornate mirrors – the list of Leah's creations is endless, and each piece is both gorgeous and functional. "I hate having to dust," she joked, "so my pieces are made to be used. My friends call me 'The Functional One.'"

Leah enjoys using many methods, including fumed pieces which are saggar-fired. "I wrap the piece in aluminum with

Spanish moss and copper sulfate crystals, fire the *raku* kiln to 1,200 degrees; then pull it and set it aside to cool," she explained. "When you pull back the aluminum, there are all these wonderful colors. No two pieces ever come out alike." Pieces take at least three days to cool when fired in the downdraft kiln. Leah finds the waiting time nerve-wracking. "I've singed my eyebrows before by trying to look inside too early," she smiled.

Leah's talented hands also play the fiddle; she has played at some of her gallery shows with Al accompanying her on guitar, bringing her two talents together harmoniously. "I love music," she expressed. "When I'm throwing a pot, I'll turn my blue grass music up and it becomes an escape. It's peaceful."

Leah may have discovered her talent a bit later than some, but thanks to the support of her family and some inspirational friends, she has molded

herself into quite the potter. Her pieces balance strength and durability with delicate, intricate beauty. She is always quick to give credit where it is due. "Ron passed away a few years ago. He was always such an inspiration to me. He would call and badger me, 'How many pieces have you thrown today? Get out there and get to work!'" Leah laughed. "I always hear him in my head now when I'm working." NOW

No Matter How Hard

— By Melissa Collins

After two years of running track and cross country, 17-year-old Sam Graf believes he has changed for the better. For one thing, he goes to sleep by 9:30 p.m. Before committing to running, Sam used to stay up late reading or playing video games until whatever time his body fell asleep. Sleeping seven or more hours gives Sam the energy he needs to do what he loves.

"My passion is not necessarily running, but it is the ability to just start something and push myself through it and keep going — no matter how hard it is," said Sam, who lived in Maypearl before moving to Burleson two summers ago. The first time Sam ran more than half a mile, he went with the Burleson High School (BHS) cross country team to Fort Worth and ran a three-mile course in 24-and-a-half minutes.

"That was the hardest thing I'd ever done," said Sam, who had not practiced because during the prior summer, he had helped his family pack up and move everything from Maypearl to their new home off of East Renfro. "During my first day at my new school, which was so huge, I couldn't find the cross country coach," remembered Sam. "Finally I found him. He said, 'We have a race this week.' I just did it. We were still trying to move; it was crazy!"

The fun of the run and camaraderie with the team hooked Sam into cross country. The following year, Sam ran an 18-minute three-mile. "That's better than average, but not amazing," Sam explained. "A really good time is 16 minutes. A slow time is 20 minutes." Slow-but-sure improvement is Sam's personal challenge.

"Our coach always told us that running is 10 percent ability and 90 percent mental. At about the mile mark is where I start talking to myself," said Sam, who sometimes sings a song in his head. "It's called 'The Air That I Breathe,' and it goes like this: 'I will not relent, no, no I will never suffer defeat; just like the air that I breathe, I will not choke on failure.' That gets my adrenaline going a little bit."

Such discipline helped Sam run 40 miles-per-week to train for last year's 26-mile marathon. Another blessing Sam gets from the exertion is pure pleasure. "During the season, all that matters is time. Out of season, it's the amazing feeling you get about 10 minutes after you run."

Sam uses that "amazing feeling" to excel in academics as well. "I feel like a nerd sometimes," Sam said. "The truth is, I love chemistry and engineering. This year, I'm taking advanced placement Chemistry II and am a teacher's assistant for the chemistry teacher, so I get a double dose of it!" Sam especially appreciates how much easier it is to learn after his normal morning routine of running, lifting weights, and even swimming laps.

"I don't understand what it does physiologically, but it makes it easier to focus after I've exercised. You are refreshed and ready to go, not all sleepy because you just woke up," Sam explained, who eats breakfast before workouts. "It's something small: a couple of Nutri-Grain bars, a bottle of water and maybe some crackers. After workout I'll really eat: a tall glass of chocolate milk, protein powder, an apple, a banana and cereal." Sam dedicated himself to this habit after

his coach brought in a nutritionist to talk to the team about what and when to eat. "This will make me healthier later on in life, because I won't be eating all the junk food," said Sam, adding: "You'll get a lot better when you eat right while you're running."

This spring, Sam is pushing himself to go faster and faster around the rubbery asphalt track at BHS. "I run the two mile. Track builds upon your endurance, and focuses on speed. [If] you already can do the three miles, the idea is to get faster at the two miles." Sam is currently training for a triathlon in his off hours, and his challenge is underwater laps. "I like air," Sam laughed.

All this training has changed more than Sam's life only. "It's changed my family's life," he said. "They don't see

Track builds upon your endurance, and focuses on speed.

me in the mornings now, since I'm out the door by 5:00 a.m. At the end of some days, I'll be super tired and will want to curl up and sleep. But that's not the best thing for me. So I'll sit around, talk and enjoy time with my family."

Sam credits some of his success to his family's support. "My dad is a really worrisome kind of guy," grinned Sam. "When I go on my long runs, I'll see his truck and realize he's watching to make sure I come home safely. And my mom will sometimes try to ride her bike alongside me while I'm running."

More than anything, this young athlete relies on his own mental capability to push himself to do his best. "Say someone's really slow, but they work really hard and are always there at practice, always working, always getting better for three or four years. They will become the athlete who makes good time," insisted Sam. NOW

A Taste of Heaven

— By Melissa Collins

You can find happiness at WineStyles in Burleson. Come in to buy wine or a gift, and you know that every bottle is guaranteed. "If my customer calls to say they did not like the wine they bought, I tell 'em to put the cork in it and bring it back," said owner Amanda Ferguson. "I exchange it, because with wine it's all about taste buds!"

WineStyles offers weekly wine tastings on Wednesday nights. "We help people learn their taste buds, because everybody's are different," Amanda said. She hosts wine tastings for nonprofits free of charge, giving 10 percent of the daily sales to the cause, something she has done since day one.

In 2006, Amanda bought into the WineStyles franchise and opened her first store in Hudson Oaks. This was not at all in her "plan." Throughout high school in Mansfield, Amanda envisioned herself as a lawyer. "After college, I moved to New York and worked with the New York State Senate. I came back to Texas to go to law school. The first month I was home, I met the couple that owns the Mansfield WineStyles and absolutely fell in love with the concept," Amanda said. She immediately applied for a business loan. "A month after I opened up the Hudson Oaks store, I met my husband, Shayne," Amanda remembered. "I think it was meant to be. It's my happily ever after."

She was five months pregnant with her first child, Brody, when she opened the Burleson Commons store, and last month, Amanda began operating the store. The business succeeds, said Amanda, because WineStyles markets to average wine drinkers, selling most bottles for less than $25 from well-organized shelves. Each wine is described on artfully designed labels, allowing the uninitiated to decide whether the beverage will fit their taste buds.

"We do have a section called *If You Insist* (on paying more); these are limited-edition, special occasion wines," Amanda said. "For example, only 300 cases were made in the U.S. of a Napa Valley cabernet sauvignon, and my store got one of them. My Mollydooker wines [from Australia], I order a year in advance. Those are pretty popular, but very expensive."

Most WineStyles wines are meant to be drunk within the next two years. Still, Amanda sells *Beaujolais Nouveau* during the first half of every November, and

hosts a tasting of the wine which should be drunk in season. Last year, they sold out of their *Beaujolais Nouveau* just as little Brody turned 6 months old.

As Amanda nurtures both her son and her business, her husband helps her when he is not busy coaching football and teaching science at the middle school in Joshua. Her parents also help, often babysitting Brody. She and Shayne decided to rear their family in Burleson because they like the school district. "And it's still a small town feel with the amenities of being in a bigger city."

WineStyles is one of those amenities; it is great to walk into a place where someone will help you find your wine. "When I moved out here, I found Burleson's tastes were a little different from those in Hudson Oaks, so I have

"It's wonderful to have customers who have been with me since I've opened."

catered to the customers," said Amanda, who loves to be in the store. She and her employees make customized gift baskets for any occasion, and now deliver to Johnson, Tarrant and Parker counties. "I like to know my customers by name. It's wonderful to have customers who have been with me since I've opened, who have watched Brody grow." Always perky and energetic, Amanda is in heaven. You can join her.

WineStyles, located in Burleson Commons at 1571 S.W. Wilshire Blvd., Suite 505, is open Monday - Saturday, 11:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. (817) 484-2202. NOW

Hosts With the Most

— By Melissa Collins

In the heart of Burleson lives a family with a passion for learning. Steve and Keri Henderson have been blessed with five "daughters" who are not their real children — yet are cared for as though they were. These teenage foreign exchange students whom the Henderson's have hosted during the last three years are participants in the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program through Burleson High School (BHS).

The goal of FLEX is to provide an opportunity for high school students from the countries of the former Soviet Union to experience life in a democratic society. The U.S. State Department helps fund FLEX, through which over 14,000 students from the former Soviet Union have spent one academic year attending schools and living with host families throughout the United States. Keri and Steve decided to be a host family since they had a lot of extra room in their home.

Both "parents" are perfectly qualified for their roles. A geologist by training, Steve works as a technical instructor for Halliburton and has learned to listen through thick accents and beyond cultural habits to understand the needs of his multicultural students. At home, Steve uses the same talents to help his daughters, who visit Burleson from far-away countries in Eastern Europe, Asia and the Middle East in order to understand democratic values and institutions.

Likewise, Keri is a professional teacher of students with special needs in the Joshua school district. She applies tried-and-true techniques to address her teenage daughters' special needs, which evolve from cultural differences. Their current exchange student, 16-year-old Nastya Kuzmina, hails from Sterlitamak, Russia. She speaks four languages and is learning Spanish this year at BHS.

"Education is far more than what happens in the classroom," Keri said. Steve has found some details of American life must not be taken for granted. For instance, he teaches the girls about money. "It is especially surprising to them that denominations are not always comparable to size," Steve said. "How can a dime be worth more than a nickel?"

"One thing we do is teach them to budget their money. The girls get a monthly stipend of $125 that's supposed to cover a whole lot of stuff. Nastya has a lot of things she wants to do. This year she'll go on the Broadcast Journalism trip to Florida. Setting the money aside has been a learning process," said Keri, "since like most teenagers Nastya likes to spend money when she has it."

Thanks to the Hendersons, Nastya has been to art galleries, the ballet, the symphony, and has also learned to ride a horse. "We try to expose them to as many new experiences as we can," Steve said. "However, we don't expose them just to the good parts of American life. We want them to know that here, it's not as rosy as the movies and Hollywood glamour present."

The Hendersons make sure Nastya thinks about the big picture of life in the United States. "With the recession this year, we've been able to have some conversations with Nastya about how we've gotten where we are, how people are spending money unwisely, that consumerism is not necessarily always a good thing," Keri said. Steve added: "I probably know more about Russian history than American

history. When our daughters find a flaw with American laws, it's always fun to argue with them about how it's different from back home [in their native country]."

As any good mom or home economics teacher would do, Keri helps her daughters develop as young women. "Most of the girls come with recipes and want to cook," Keri smiled. "We're both learning, and they'll come with lists of ingredients that we can't always find here (like black radishes). We figure out the ratios of ingredients, because their measurements are very different." The girls are also required to fulfill a certain number of community service hours for the FLEX program, so Keri helps them find opportunities to serve.

"Church is one experience that's absolutely new to most of them," added Steve. "Yes," agreed Nastya, "I think I've been to Russian church two or three times in my life. It's so strict. You can't go without a veil; you cannot wear makeup on your face. You have to wear a long skirt and no heels." Here, Nastya has met friends through her Wednesday night youth group at the Henderson's church.

Steve also introduces his daughters to peanut butter. "It's great fun to watch the reaction on one of these girls' faces when she tastes peanut butter for the first time at the age of 16!"

Nastya loves peanut butter. "I saw it one time in Russia; it's really hard to find it at home. I will miss it." Fortunately for Nastya, a new Burleson friend has promised to send regular peanut butter shipments when Nastya returns to Sterlitamak, her hometown. With help from friends and family like the Hendersons, Nastya should have no problem achieving her dreams of studying at the University of Texas and becoming a public relations manager in the United States. What a great way to share! NOW

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Ribbon cuttings were held at: Devon Energy, top left; Century 21 Home Team, second row left; A Team Hope Company, bottom left; Happy Tails Too Complete Pet Care & Boutique, bottom center; and AFLAC, bottom right. The Life Skills group from Burleson High School, top right, enjoyed posing for a photograph. Perfect Image Medical Spa, second row right, recently held an open house.

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The Burleson High School varsity girls soccer team, top left, enjoyed the spring-like weather. Ribbon cuttings were held at: Playtime Shuttle, top right; Burleson Independent Soccer Association, second row center; National Direct Media, second row right; Tactile Systems, second row left; Rodgers Luttrell, bottom left; and Space Walk of Burleson, bottom right.

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Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning

In the Kitchen with Marie Bomgardner

Creating wonderful memories and incredible meals are two of Marie's favorite things in life. "When my children were small they liked for me to make Chinese dinners," she fondly recalled. "We would sit on the floor around our long coffee table and eat with chop sticks. What a wonderful memory." Now Marie is making new memories by teaching her four granddaughters how to cook.

Baking is Marie's preferred form of cooking. Her recipe collection stems from old family recipes to ones collected from magazines. Her favorite recipes are her bran muffins and her Italian cream cake. "My husband, Terry, and I like to take my bran muffins to friends who are not able to be out and about or don't have family close by," she said. "It warms the heart."

To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at www.nowmagazines.com.

CARAMEL PIE

1 can Eagle Brand milk
2 to 3 bananas
1 graham cracker pie crust
1 8-oz. tub Cool Whip
1 small jar caramel topping
pecans (optional)

Remove label from can of milk and place can in saucepan. Do not open the can, just cover it with water; cook, simmering for 2 to 3 hours to caramelize the milk. Place it in the refrigerator to chill. Once chilled, slice the bananas into the pie crust; cover with the milk. Top with the Cool Whip and drizzle the topping over the Cool Whip. You can sprinkle a few diced pecans on top if desired.

RAISIN BRAN MUFFINS

1 cup Raisin Bran cereal
1 cup boiling water
1 1/2 cups sugar
1/2 cup oil
2 eggs
2 cups buttermilk
2 1/2 cups sugar
1 tsp. salt
2 1/2 tsp. baking soda
2 cups bran cereal

Soak Raisin Bran in boiling water; set aside. Mix 1 1/2 cups sugar, oil, eggs and buttermilk. Sift 2 1/2 cups sugar, salt and baking soda; add to buttermilk mixture. Add bran cereal and soaked Raisin Bran; mix well. Let stand overnight in refrigerator before using. Bake about 20 minutes at 400 F. The batter will keep in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 weeks.

BREAKFAST CARAMEL ROLLS

Make these at night, before bed; preset oven to come on in the morning and they will be ready to eat when you get up!

1 pkg. frozen raw yeast rolls
1 stick butter
1 Tbsp. cinnamon
1 cup brown sugar
3/4 cup pecans, chopped

Chop each roll into 3 pieces (do not thaw). Place rolls in a one-piece angel food cake pan or large Bundt pan. Place butter, cinnamon and brown sugar in a microwave bowl; heat until melted. Pour over the rolls. Sprinkle pecans on top and stir just enough to mix; place in cold oven to rise overnight. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes at 350 F.

PINEAPPLE DESSERT

1 pint whipping cream
2 egg whites, beaten
1/2 tsp. vanilla

1/2 cup butter
1 cup sugar
2 egg yolks, beaten
1 small can crushed pineapple, drained
1 cup diced pecans
1 box vanilla wafers

Whip cream and egg whites, separately; fold together. Add vanilla; set aside. Cream butter and sugar; gradually add beaten egg yolks. Add pineapple and pecans. Carefully fold the butter and sugar mixture into the whipped cream mixture. Line a 9-inch square pan with the wafers; add 1/2 the mixture. Add another layer of wafers and the last of the mixture. Top with a few crushed wafers; chill overnight.

WACKY CAKE

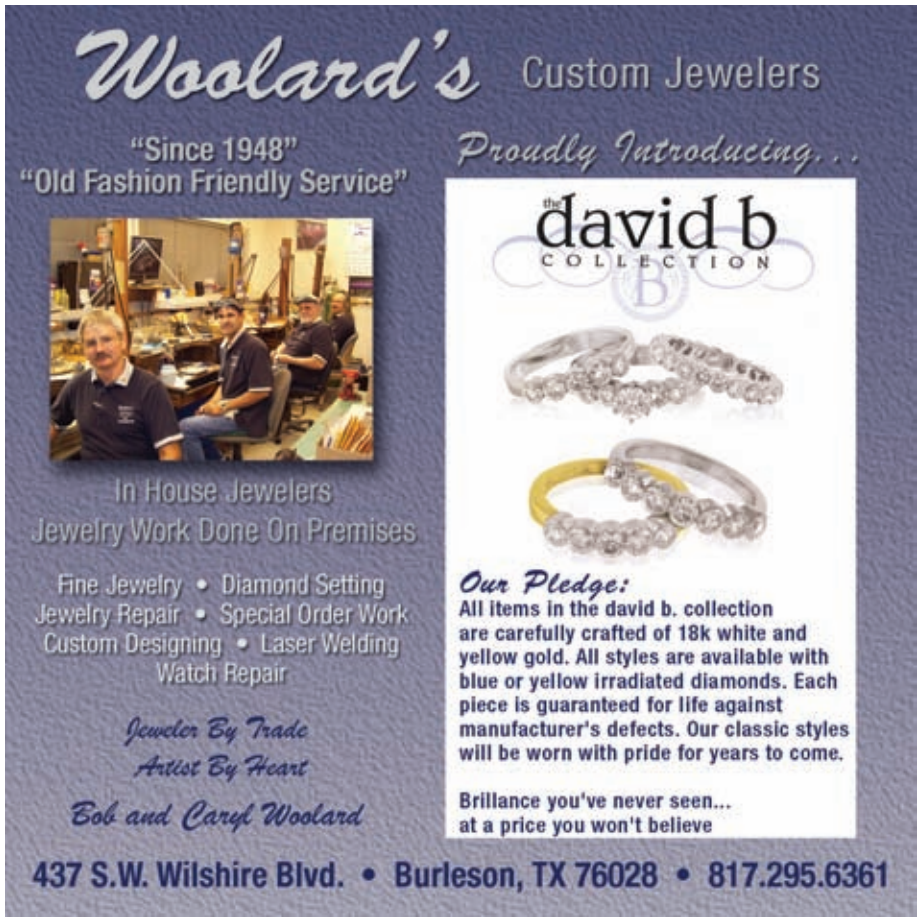
2 cups regular flour
1 cup cake flour
1/2 cup cocoa
2 cups sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. soda
3/4 cup oil
2 tsp. vanilla
2 Tbsp. vinegar
2 cups cold water
1/2 cup milk
1 Tbsp. flour
1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

Sift regular and cake flour, cocoa, sugar, salt and soda into an ungreased 9 x 13-inch pan. Pour oil, vanilla, vinegar and cold water over dry ingredients. Stir with a fork until well mixed. Do not beat. Bake for 25 - 30 minutes at 350 F. Prepare frosting by cooking milk and flour until thickened, stirring often; let cool. Beat butter and sugar. Beat both mixtures together until it looks like whipped cream. Add vanilla; spread on cooled cake.

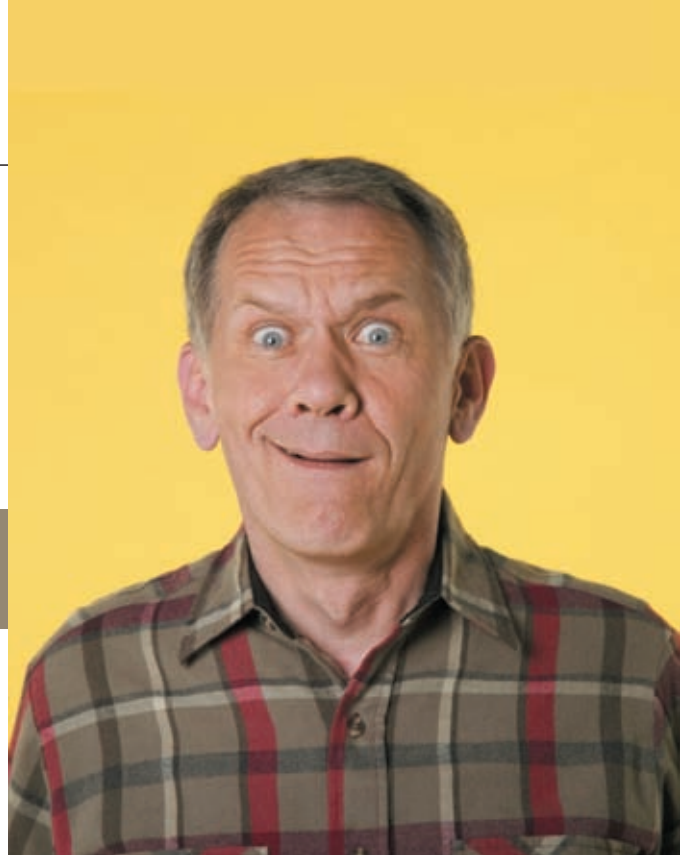
COCOA FUDGE

2/3 cup Hershey's cocoa
3 cups sugar
1/8 tsp. salt
1 1/2 cups milk
1/4 cup butter
1 tsp. vanilla

In a medium saucepan, sift together cocoa, sugar and salt. Gradually add milk. Bring to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Continue to boil, without stirring, until mixture reaches a soft ball stage (234 F). Remove from heat; add butter and vanilla. Do not stir. Allow fudge to cool to room temperature (about 110 F). Beat by hand until fudge thickens and loses some of its sheen. Pour into butter platter to cool.



Five Ideas for Staying Sane in a Crazy Market



— By Craig Couch and Rex Russell

A key part of managing your money is managing your emotions, particularly when the stock market is going through a period of uncertainty. Being able to keep your cool is one of the most valuable skills you can have as an investor.

Stay on course by continuing to save.

Even if the value of your holdings fluctuates, regularly adding to an account that is designed for a long-term goal may cushion the emotional impact of market swings. If losses are offset, even in part, by new savings, the bottom-line number on your statement might not be quite so discouraging.

If you are using dollar-cost averaging — investing a specific amount regularly regardless of fluctuating price levels — you may be getting a bargain by buying when prices are down. However, dollar-cost averaging cannot guarantee a profit or protect against a loss, and you should consider your financial ability to continue purchases through periods of low price levels.

Stick with your game plan.

Solid asset allocation is the basis of sound investing. One of the reasons a diversified portfolio is so important is that strong performance of some investments may help offset poor performance by others. Even with an appropriate asset allocation, some parts of a portfolio may struggle at any given time. Diversification cannot guarantee a profit or protect against a loss, but it can help you balance risks.

Look in the rearview mirror.

If you are investing long-term, sometimes it helps to take a look back and see how far you have come. If your portfolio is down this year, it can be easy to forget any progress you may already have made over the years, though past performance is no guarantee of future returns.

Think about why you made a specific investment in the first place. That can help you determine if it still deserves a place in your investing strategy. Understanding how a specific holding fits in your portfolio also can help you consider whether a lower price might actually represent a buying opportunity. If you do not know an investment's purpose in your overall strategy, now is the time to find out.

Remember that everything is relative.

Most of the variance in the returns of different portfolios is generally attributable to their asset allocations. If you have a well-diversified portfolio, it could be useful to compare its overall performance to relevant benchmarks. If you find that your investments are at least matching those benchmarks, that realization might help you feel better about your overall strategy.

Remind yourself that nothing lasts forever.

Ups and downs are normal for the stock market. If you regret not selling at a market peak, or missed a bargain, remember that you are likely to have other opportunities at some point. Having predetermined guidelines for buying and selling can prevent emotion from dictating investment decisions. NOW

Craig Couch and Rex Russell are financial advisers with Couch & Russell Financial Group.

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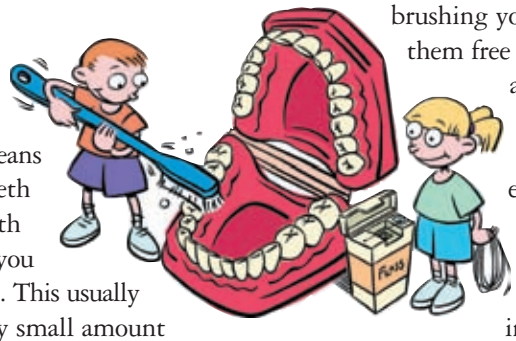
Children's Dental Health

— By Betty Tryon, R.N.

Is there anything sweeter than the sight of a child with a big smile on his or her face? Even if the smile has a few empty holes, it is still a beautiful thing to behold. If the empty spaces in the mouth are because of the normal growing process — no problem. However, if the empty spaces are because of tooth decay, there is a big problem. Dental care for children starts as soon as that first tooth proudly pushes its way to light. This does not mean parents need to rush their babies to the dentist; it means there is another element to childcare that needs to be addressed. The American Dental Association recommends dental appointments begin when your child is 1 year old.



In the beginning, a moist washcloth cleans those tiny pearls just fine. When more teeth emerge, switch to a child's toothbrush with soft bristles. Do not use toothpaste until you are confident your child will not swallow it. This usually happens around 2 years of age. Only a very small amount of toothpaste is necessary. Toothbrushes should be replaced every three months. When your child is older, teach them how to floss. Include this as part of the overall dental health regime. Starting this routine when the child is very young habituates them to a lifetime of good health practices.

Dental health is important to avoid decay of the teeth. Tooth decay is the most common childhood disease, and the percentage of children who fall prey to this is on the upswing. Some parents may think that decay in baby teeth is not as important as in permanent teeth because baby teeth will fall out eventually. There are a couple of flaws in this line of thinking. For one, some of the baby teeth will stay with the child for many years. Also, cavities are painful and will influence how your child thinks, behaves and eats during this time.

There is a simple preventative to tooth decay — brushing your teeth (and your children's) to keep them free of plaque. Plaque sticks to teeth and attracts bacteria, which in turn feeds on the sugar in food, turning it into acid. The acid breaks down the tooth enamel causing cavities. Diet plays an important role in dental health. A child's intake of sugar should be monitored and limited. That includes drinks with sugar in them. Encourage snacks such as fresh vegetables and fruits, cheese and crackers, whole-wheat pretzels, trail mix and popcorn. Giving your child's teeth the attention they deserve can ensure many years of a beautiful smile. NOW

This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician for questions regarding this topic.

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Time to Cut Back

— By Nancy Fenton

It is time to begin to think about cutting back. I am not talking about the cash you are spending or the food you are eating, but the plants and trees around your landscape! There are some good and some better times to reduce the size of trees and plants. Most plants can take a bit of pruning almost anytime, but for trees, the best time is early spring (mid-to-late February or early March). Dead wood can come out anytime, but cuts into living wood will stimulate new growth which you want, but not if there is a possibility of a freeze within the following six weeks. After you eliminate the dead wood, it is time to take a good look at the branches, taking off any that are rubbing on others. (The places where they rub are ideal sites for fungus and disease to get a foothold.) No pruning paint is needed if you cut back to the source (trunk or larger limb) and angle the cut to make sure that it will be flush and no water will stand in it.

Tree cuts can be made to train the plant in the growth pattern you desire. (For me, that means pruning them so no branches will hit me in the face when I mow!) I like to take out as many of the small, one-inch thick or smaller branches (called water spouts) which grow off the large limbs as I can reach so the sun will be able to filter through a bit more. This is called opening up the canopy, and it makes a big difference to the grass and flowers trying to grow under the trees. My Christmas gift of an electric pole saw should really extend my reach this year!

Please do not crawl up in your trees to do your pruning! Heights and sharp objects do not mix! Do what you can from the ground, remembering there is always another year. Our big trees tend to get shocked when more than a third of their leaf coverage bites the dust, so plan carefully what you want to do and please do it safely! NOW

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener in Ellis County.

February 2009 Community Calendar

Every Tuesday
Professional Power Team networking group meeting: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Blue Mesa on University Dr., Fort Worth. (817) 295-2161.

Every Wednesday
Breakfast Club networking group meeting: 7:30-9:00 a.m., Cracker Barrel. (817) 295-2161.

Burleson/Crowley Network Connection meeting: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Spring Creek Barbeque. (817) 295-2161.

Second and Fourth Wednesdays
Burleson Lions Club meeting: 12:00-1:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church. (817) 980-9436.

Every Thursday
Burleson Making It Happen Network Connection group meeting: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Sammy's Italian Restaurant. (817) 295-2161.

Job Fair: 10:00 a.m. - noon, Burleson Senior Center. Call Pat Cunningham, Director of Experience Works, at (817) 558-7020.

Fourth Thursdays
American Business Women's Burleson Charter Chapter meeting: 6:30 p.m. at a local restaurant. Meeting and meal: 7:00 p.m. RSVP to Linda Houst at (817) 295-7060 or ljh67@sbcglobal.net, or Sue McKnight at (817) 295-3220.

Every Friday
Burleson Business Builders networking group meeting: 8:30-9:30 a.m., JJ Mocha's. (817) 295-2161.

February 2 and 16
Burleson City Council meeting: 7:00 p.m., City Hall. (817) 447-5400.

February 1-15
"Alamo Images: Changing Perceptions of a Texas Experience," an exhibition hosted by the Burleson Public Library, surveys the Alamo of the Texas imagination through illustrations drawn from historical documents, paintings, sketches, cartoons, comic books, TV and movie interpretations. For more information, call the Burleson Public Library at (817) 295-6131.

February 6, 7
Father/Daughter, Mother/Son 2009 Valentine's Dance, co-sponsored by the Burleson Rotary Club: 6:00-9:00 p.m., Burleson Community Center, 500 Chisenhall Park Ln. (off of Hidden Creek Pkwy.). Advance tickets: $15 per couple, available at the community center. Tickets at the door: $25 per couple. Dinner, dancing, live disc jockey, corsages and pictures are included in the price of the ticket. (817) 295-8168.

February 9
Burleson ISD Board meeting: 6:30 p.m. (817) 245-1000.

February 10
Burleson Heritage Foundation meeting: 7:00-8:30 p.m., Heritage Visitors Center, 124 W. Ellison (the old Interurban Building in Old Town). (817) 447-1575.

February 14
Valentine's Day.

February 16
Student Holiday from Burleson Independent School District. (817) 245-1000.

February 21
Athena Mardi Gras Gala: 6:30 p.m. - midnight, Mountain Valley Country Club, Joshua. Casino play, live auction, silent auction, hors d'oeuvres, breakfast served at 11:00 p.m. $5 per person in advance, $50 at the door. Monies raised go to support: the Careity Foundation, which helps cancer patients and their families in Johnson County; the Cook Children's Palliative Care Program; the New Journeys Christian Women's Job Corps. Investigate sponsorship opportunities at www.athenasocietyofburleson.org.

February 28
Auditions for Kiwanis Club of Burleson's Christian Music Talent Show for sixth- through 12th-grade students: First Baptist Church, 317 W. Ellison St. Performers can be individuals or a group no larger than 15 people. For pre-application forms, rules and eligibility, contact Wayne Davidson at (817) 733-8986 or bur88kiwanis@charter.net.

For more community events, visit our online calendar at www.nowmagazines.com.

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